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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MOVEMENTS TO OUST PRESIDENT CHEN
SHUI-BIAN

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage August 24 on former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust President Chen Shui-bian; the many attacks against Shih's planned movement and against him personally; and the KMT's first-ever party assets report, which was released Wednesday. The pro-status quo "China Times" dedicated two-thirds of its page three to carrying a letter by Lung Yin-tai, a well-known writer and scholar in both Taiwan and China, explaining why she did not donate NT\$100 to Shih's campaign but believes President Chen should resign. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, on the other hand, ran a banner headline on page four that said "Shih Ming-teh's [Campaign] to Oust Bian Is Evolving Toward Blue-Green Confrontation." Several papers also carried remarks by an unnamed U.S. State Department official regarding President Chen's planned transit of Guam in early September. The official was quoted as saying that the U.S. decision over whether to allow Chen to transit Guam is unaffected by Taiwan's current political situation and thus cannot be interpreted as the United States support for Chen or not.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said Washington's clear indication that it will not get involved in Taiwan's political situation is the most important reason why President Chen appears to be "composed and self-assured." The article also said that the campaign to oust Bian has led Chen to return to the political battlefield he is most familiar with, and as a result, September could be a crisis and a turning point for Chen. End summary.

"Green Camp Keeps Firing Severe Attacks at Shih, Bian Carried Away with His Triumph"

Journalist Huang Ya-shih noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/24):

"... Bian's confident looks indicated that the atmosphere has changed over the past week. The series of moves taken by Bian's team to 'pacify Green supporters and expel outside attacks' gave Chen full confidence to win the battle and secure his position. The U.S. side's clear position that it will not get involved in Taiwan's political situation was, without a doubt, the most important reason that Bian has appeared to be 'composed and self-assured.' Even though Chen's 'unpredictability' often gave the United States headaches, Washington has doubts about Vice President Annette Lu succeeding Chen as president, and it is even more worried about the political upheavals which might be triggered by Chen's resignation. Bian chose to transit Guam, an external territory of the United States, probably because he was sure that Washington would not oppose such a proposal. Bian can thus seize such an opportunity to create the impression that the United States supports him.

"In Taiwan, even though the movements to oust Bian seem overwhelming, the development of the situation...somehow oddly reduced the pressure directly imposed by the Blue and Green camps on Bian. The public pressure originally demanding a review of, and criticism against, Bian, and for the move to draw a line separate Bian and the DPP, used to fall on the DPP and its four top heavyweights. Voices calling for reform of the DPP, from [Bian's] ceding some of his powers to the dissolution of the party's factions, seemed incessant, and A-bian was constantly in a 'to be tortured' position. But since the emergence of the movements to oust Bian, DPP legislators have launched a series of planned moves to smear Shih Ming-teh, and as a result, Bian's pressure on the Green camp has grown relatively lighter.

"The movements to oust Bian have even mitigated Bian's crisis with the pro-independence activists. As the campaign to unseat the president gained more and more momentum, it has turned into a show venue for pan-Blue celebrities, a development that conveniently gave the DPP a chance to define the campaign as a copy of the protests against the March 19 shooting in 2004. The deep-Green supporters who used to be slightly displeased with A-bian were left with no choice but to take his side. ...

"As for people power, it will be very difficult to bring Chen down from his position from within the system. Chen, who is well-versed in the law, is also clearly aware of this; that is why he has repeatedly referred to the law, saying 'my term will end in 2008,' and that the 'the issue must be resolved via the system.' Compared with the previous beaten and vulnerable position Chen was in, the campaign to oust Bian has led him to return to the political battlefield that he is most familiar with. In Bian's eyes, September may be a crisis for him, but it may also be a turning point for him 'to rise from demise again.'"

YOUNG